# ARTIST IN PARADISE

By ÉTIENNE PALÉZIEUX

*Paul Jacoulet is a French artist living in Tokyo. In his mode of life (including his home) as well as his methods of work, he has adopted the Japanese style, and he has done much to revive the old traditions of the Japanese woodcut.*

*In his artist's life of wandering, he has traveled the length and breadth of the South Sea Islands. He has spent many years on them and has made a close study of the nature and ways of living of their inhabitants.*

*The variety of human types and the picturesque appearance of the South Sea islanders enticed him to perpetuate them in line and color. The result is some 2,000 drawings which are not only a treat for connoisseurs of the graphic arts but also represent extremely interesting material of documentary value for ethnological and racial research. In order fully to appreciate the pictures, they should be seen in all the rich color of the originals. Jacoulet's models are not figments of his imagination: they all live, or at least have lived, they all have names, and most of them a history.*

*The South Sea Islands which are dealt with here have no longer been accessible to foreigners for years. Moreover, by virtue of their key position in Japan's supremacy in the Pacific, they are of great topical importance. The author of the following pages, Monsieur Palézieux, is known to our readers from his article on Crete published in our issue of January 1943.—K.M.*

"ONE day in the spring of 1929," goes Monsieur Jacoulet's story, "I was overtaken in Tokyo by an almost tropical shower of rain. Having no umbrella I turned up my collar and hurried home. Suddenly I heard someone calling out to me from behind: 'Moshi, moshi!' Turning round, I saw a strange-looking boy standing there and offering me his huge umbrella, a model from the days of our grandfathers. The boy was about thirteen or fourteen years old, remarkably well built, and decently dressed. He had a pale-brown skin and big dark eyes. It was quite obvious that this was no Tokyo face and, as I slipped under his protective rain-roof, I inquired with curiosity where he was from. He answered with something that sounded like 'Truk' or 'Ruk.' I thought he had not understood me and repeated my question. Again I heard that peculiar word 'Truk.' As far as I knew there was no country of that name on the globe. Impatiently I finally asked him his nationality. 'Truk' was the stereotyped answer. My patience came to an end, and I cried: 'What the devil is Truk?'

"Well, several months later I landed on the South Sea island of Truk, upon the invitation of Pierre Nedelec, the father of my exotic acquaintance. Nedelec had once been a seaman in French service and had drifted into the South Sea Islands some fifty years before. In contrast to his predecessor Robinson Crusoe, however, he had found plenty to eat, a friendly Kanaka tribe and, moreover, an orderly German administration on his island. He married a South Sea beauty, the mother of my young friend."

Monsieur Jacoulet remained there much longer than he had intended and, in the course of the following years, he became well acquainted with a large part of this South Sea Island world, which he has interpreted by many hundreds of color prints.

### MEET MICRONESIA

It has become the custom to divide the countless islands scattered over the Pacific into three main groups: Polynesia in the east (to which belong also the Hawaiian Islands), Melanesia southwest of the equator, and Micronesia north of the equator. The South Sea Islands dealt with in this article all belong to Micronesia. Micronesia in turn is divided into four groups: the Marianas, the Caro-

lines, the Marshall, and the Gilbert Islands.

The entire Micronesian world extends over an area 2,700 nautical miles long and 1,300 wide. The distances between the individual islands are considerably greater than they appear from a superficial glance at the map. Thus the distance from Saipan in the Marianas to Palau in the Western Carolines is equal to the distance from Shanghai to Kobe, and that from Palau to Jaluit in the Marshall group equals that from San Francisco to Chicago. So there are vast spaces between the groups and, within these groups again, between the various islands. This explains the fact that races, languages, customs, and social orders have developed independently of each other on these islands and are therefore often very different. Hence there is something in the idea of regarding all of Micronesia as a continent and its island groups such as Yap, Palau, and Truk as its countries.

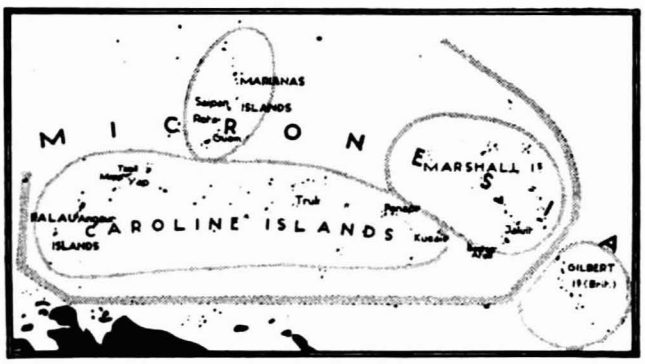
The total number of the Micronesian islands exceeds 1,500. Their size varies between 150 and 3 square miles or less. A geological distinction is made between islands of volcanic origin, coral islands, and coral reefs. Their climate is something like that of Tokyo in July and August, but it is alleviated by constant sea breezes and frequent showers.

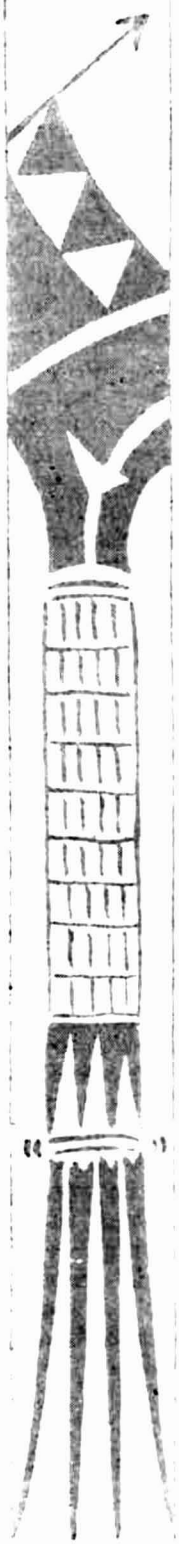
All South Sea islands are endowed with rich vegetation which, however, is, with few exceptions, of comparatively little use to Man. The most important plant is the coconut palm, from which copra is produced. But the natives have always known how to make use of everything offered them by Nature. The plants supply them with food, fibers for their admittedly very scanty clothing, building material for houses and boats, dyestuffs, medicines, and ornaments. The islanders have also been wise enough not to overexploit these sources of supply.

Zoological life is not very rich. All those animals which make life elsewhere in the tropics so dangerous, as, for example, beasts of prey, poisonous snakes, and poisonous insects, are nonexistent. On the other hand, there is a great wealth of sea life. The only mineral products to be found on the islands are phosphates, of which the main deposits are on Angaur.

### ANCIENT FORTIFICATIONS

We know practically nothing about the history of Micronesia before the arrival of the first white men, let alone about its earliest history. No written documents have been handed down, and that which has been conserved in oral tradition is more than a little confused. However, a few strange stone witnesses of the past have been preserved. On the west coast of the island of Ponape stand the ruins of Nan-matal and Nan-tauach, an extensive lagoon settlement, a Venice of the South Seas. The whole settlement consists of fifty fortified islets and covers an area of eleven square miles. What has been preserved are huge walls, fortifications which extend right into the sea like the prows of warships, fragments of walls of buildings, stairways, courtyards, quays, and even good-sized cellars. Canals take the place of roads as the routes of communication. The building material used is hexagonal or octagonal natural prisms of basalt up to twenty feet long which have been piled up, one on top of the other, according to a certain system, without any effort at joining the stones. This herculean work appears even more amazing when one





learns that these gigantic blocks were transported over distances of fifteen miles and more from basalt quarries in the interior of the island and even from the islet of Jokaj on the other side of Ponape.

This place was built and inhabited by a dark-skinned race with a fairly high civilization which was entirely different from the present yellowish-brown population. So far, science has not been able to find out more about these fortifications, especially about their meaning and purpose. Perhaps we have here the fortified base of a powerful prehistoric people that carried on an extensive trade in the Pacific. Perhaps this was a kind of Gibraltar of the South Seas.

### THE WHITE MAN ARRIVES

The discovery of Micronesia by white men took place in the course of the great voyages of discovery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The first to discover these islands was Magellan, who touched at the Mariana islands of Guam and Rota on March 6, 1521, on his voyage around the world. In the following decades, the Spanish discovered the eastern group of the Marshall Islands. In 1564 they took possession of the Marianas on behalf of the crown of Spain. In 1686 they discovered other islands, which they called the Carolines. Economically speaking, all these islands showed no profit for the Spanish, since the hoped-for natural treasures were not to be found there. As a result, the interest in these islands which, moreover, were unfavorably situated, soon waned, and the activity of the Spaniards was finally limited to converting the natives to Christianity. Gradually the islands sank back into the darkness of oblivion.

When the period of the Anglo-Saxon navigators of the eighteenth century began, the islands came into frequent contact with the outer world through the visits of whalers, merchants, missionaries, explorers, and warships. Of particular interest were the visits of whalers, who made the islands the starting points and bases of their whaling expeditions. This inevitably resulted in a kind of barter trade between the seamen and the natives, in the course of which such fatal things as alcohol, firearms, and infectious diseases were also imported.

### BUSINESS AND POLITICS

The oldest business undertaking was that of the German Adolf Capelle, the manager of a German firm located on Hawaii, who in 1864 opened a branch on the Boston atoll (Marshall Islands) for the copra trade. He was the pioneer of copra production on the South Sea Islands and taught the islanders how to prepare copra for the export trade. An original

and very profitable business was conducted by a former freebooter, Captain David D. O'Keefe. This shrewd Irishman noticed that the inhabitants of Yap used stone disks with holes in them for money, which they imported at great risk and effort in their frail canoes from the island of Palau 260 miles away. O'Keefe chartered a Chinese junk and brought large quantities of this stone money to Yap.

None of the nations which came into contact with the South Sea Islands had any political aims at that time. It was a period of free trade, and the islands seemed too small, too far removed from world communications, and too poor in their natural resources, to become the object of serious political interests.

However, as a result of Pope Leo XIII's arbitration of December 17, 1885, the Carolines were awarded Spain; and as a result of the Anglo-German agreement of April 1886 the Marshall Islands were confirmed as being under German and the Gilbert Islands under British sovereignty. In 1899 Guam went to the USA, the victor of the Spanish-American War. The remaining Marianas and the Carolines were bought by Germany from Spain in the same year. In October 1914, Japan occupied the German South Sea colonies, and at the end of the Great War she obtained them as a mandate from the League of Nations. Now the Japanese possessions have been rounded off by the occupation of Guam.

### CHAMORROS . . .

Among the inhabitants of Micronesia, two races can be differentiated with certain reservations: the Chamorros, and the islanders usually known as Kanakas. Both groups are regarded as being basically a mixture of Polynesians, Melanesians, and Malayans. According to the official statistics of 1937, there were 3,668 Chamorros and 47,073 Kanakas. The Chamorros are to be found mainly on the Marianas. They came under Spanish rule in the middle of the sixteenth century, became Catholics, and soon gave up their former tribal life. They married Spaniards and Filipinos, whereby new racial types were created. To a certain extent, they took over European ways of living. In this, and not in the other racial admixture, is to be found the essential difference between them and the Kanakas.

The Chamorro type is shown in the painting of the sisters Margarita Pangelinang and Conception Blanca Ruiz of Guam (FIG. 2). They are in their Sunday best on their way to church. Going to church, together with playing patience and making artificial flowers, is the main occupation of the young women and girls. Housework is done by old women. The men live off their land and deal in copra. The high spots of social life are the church processions on high feast days. The Chamorros are a proud race, dress well when they are well off (the men in European clothes, the women in the Spanish colonial style shown in the painting), and are intelligent. It is not uncommon for a Chamorro to speak five languages (Chamorro, Spanish, German, Japanese, and English).

### . . . AND KANAKAS

The Kanakas inhabit the Carolines and the Marshall Islands and did not come

under European influence until the latter half of the nineteenth century. On the whole, they have retained their tribal characteristics, especially the system of clans and the primitive form of agriculture. The racial differences among them are sometimes quite considerable. If we cling to the idea of Micronesia as a continent, it seems perfectly natural that the islanders of Saipan and Truk should be as different as, for instance, the French and the Russians. The Kanakas are, moreover, very much intermixed among themselves. There is hardly an island where there are people of one racial type only; on the other hand, one can find almost every type on every island. Furthermore, it is only natural that the seafaring nations of the Occident and the Orient which touched these islands should have left their traces and contributed towards the colorfulness of the racial mosaic. One need only think of young Nedelec, whom we mentioned before, or the case of Yu-Yuh of Yap (FIG. 4), who was first married to a white man and has a son by him, a good-looking although unusual mixed type. Now she is married to the comb manufacturer Chen from Rul. In these circumstances one finds in Micronesia people of all shades, from dark brown to white, with straight and curly hair, with classical as well as negroid figures. Incidentally, the newborn children on all islands are very light-skinned, almost white. In their youth, the women are often of great beauty.

### FASHIONS AND LOVE

As long as the women of Yap are young they spend all their time on the care of their appearance. In spite of their scanty clothing, they manage to have a certain elegance. The betel-leaf skirts in which they gracefully move around are perfumed. In their smart handbags made of palm leaves they keep pomades, a watch, lipstick, tobacco, betel, and other things. They all wear black necklaces, and the very fashionable ones carry around little pink pigs in their arms, just as the ladies of other zones carry around Pekingese. In addition to their own dialect and Japanese, they usually speak German or English, and the older generation Spanish.

At village festivals they show themselves off in dances that are sometimes more than daring, and, generally speaking, sex is their main interest in life. While in Yap there is a certain, at least outward, orderliness in this respect, the inhabitants of Truk distinguish themselves by more or less open promiscuity. The medicine men are kept busy with the preparation of love elixirs and the sale of aphrodisiacs, and the tropical night often resounds with the screams of women being carried off and the shouts of their angry husbands seeking out, axe in hand, the lovers of their wives. Women who at the death of their husbands tear their hair as if possessed, who scratch their faces and run amuck against trees, throw themselves the next day with the same amount of energy into the arms of a new paramour. In former days polyandry was by no means a rare phenomenon on Truk.

On Saipan the women dress only in a blue, red, yellow, or orange *lava-lava* (loincloth), their main ornaments being flowers. The inhabitants of Saipan make their love declarations slightly

less obtrusively than the other islanders. When they want to indicate their feelings to the object of their love, they simply say: "I am anxious for your welfare!" If the girl thereupon accepts a gift, for example, a necklace, the marriage is regarded as concluded.

### CLANS

The social unit among the Kanaka peoples is the clan, that is, the blood relations with a common totemistic ancestor. Several clans form a tribe, usually one village, and several villages (ten, as a rule) a federation, whose chief proudly calls himself a "king." There has never been a union of several islands into a political body, in other words, a state. Social life is concentrated around the "All Men House." It serves for invitations, as a council chamber, as a lodging house when the village goes out to fish or to carry out public works, and as a dormitory for youths who have not yet reached maturity.

In former times the position of chief was that of head of the civil administration. In those places where the clan system gradually developed into a feudal system, the chiefs ruled with more or less dictatorial powers. The chiefs were chosen from special chieftain clans, which formed a kind of aristocracy. The members of these chieftain clans again have different ranks. By the design and coloring of the necklace one can tell the family affiliations of a man, as in Europe by his coat of arms.

Incidentally, the clan system shows a number of matriarchal characteristics. Thus a person's membership of a certain clan is determined not by marriage but solely by his matrilineal connection. His social position is derived from that of his mother (only the island of Yap forms an exception in this). Succession and the right to own land are bestowed by the matriarchal line.

Under these circumstances, there is no inequality of sexes on the islands. Monogamy is the rule. Polygamy occurs but is mainly a question of money. However, premarital promiscuity is customary more or less everywhere. Adultery is sometimes punished with death. The importance attributed to the matriarchal element is often strongly expressed by the existence of female chieftains. Theirs is the task of preserving the tribal customs and the totemistic taboos. By the modern introduction of private property the matrilineal system has been completely undermined.

### COMPLICATED CASTES

On Kusaie, Ponape, and Yap the clan system has developed into a more or less pronounced feudal system. On these islands the tribe is divided up into chieftain clans and ordinary clans, to which the slave clans are added on Ponape and Yap. Incidentally, these slaves can neither be bought nor sold. They do not belong to any individual but to the whole community of freemen. Their work can be apportioned to them only by order of the "king." These slaves are probably the descendants of tribes subjected in former days. They may not eat the same food as the freemen and are limited to sharkmeat, eel, and large bananas (which must be cooked before they are edible).

These three types of clans are often further divided into individual castes. On Yap, for instance, there are eight of these castes. Numbers 1 and 2 are chieftain castes, numbers 3 to 5 are ordinary castes, numbers 6 to 8 slave castes. (The Japanese authorities have now reduced the number of castes to five.) Thus Ra-un, a man from Mapp, an island of the Yap group (FIG. 1), belongs to the third caste. The caste a man belongs to is indicated by the type of comb he wears. These combs are carved from mangrove wood, toothed at both ends, about three inches wide and, according to caste, from six inches to two feet long. Slaves do not wear combs of this kind. The comb also indicates other things, for instance whether the wearer is married or not. Young Defmei of Tomil (FIG. 3), whom Paul Jacoulet drew as he was preparing his betel, is wearing the bachelor's comb.

The preparation of betel is for the South Sea islander just as sacred an act as the filling of the pipe with tobacco is for many other people. A betel nut is cut in half; then one half is placed on a pepper leaf and strewn with lime from a bamboo container. Now the leaf is rolled up and the "chew" pushed between the molar teeth and chewed with such enjoyment that the crimson juice drips from both corners of the mouth.

Defmei's *lava-lava* is colored red, violet, and black, the latter color indicating that he belongs to a very high caste. The coral necklace he wears is an heirloom handed down from father to son like a signet ring in the West. Defmei, who was thus destined to play an important part among the islanders, fell victim to a shark on a fishing expedition about a year and a half ago.

### VANISHING PARADISE

Till the islanders came in contact with the outer world, they led a life of paradise. Except for a loincloth made of leaves or banana fibers, they wandered around naked in the woods. They lived on breadfruit, coconuts, taro, bananas, papayas, yams, pineapple, sugar cane, and fish. Nature looked after their daily needs, and they could live idly from one day to the next. If they felt energetic, they organized a dance festival or a tribal feud. The islanders had (and still have) their own languages, but no script. As ornaments they wore garlands of flowers, earrings, necklaces, and bracelets made of shells and corals. They painted and tattooed themselves. The relations between the sexes were completely unrestricted. The fear of natural phenomena and the efforts to avoid natural catastrophes led to the formation of religious cults, wizardry, and fortune-telling.

The next period of sociological development began with the arrival of white men, who amazed the natives, not only by the color of their skin and their clothes, but also by their ships, weapons, medical skill, and other superior knowledge. This early amazement later turned to hostility, but the islanders very soon realized their helplessness before the white man and learnt to subject themselves to him. The missionaries taught the natives a simple alphabet with which they could reproduce their language. They taught them the use of tools and the basic requirements of hygiene. They also tried to instill a moral code into them. On the whole, however, no compulsion was exercised, and it was more or less left to the individual to accept the blessings of civilization or not.

In the most recent, the Japanese period, the entire life of the islands was organized and made to correspond to the standards of the Japanese. It is the age of compulsory education and young men's associations, of concrete roads and flush toilets, of clothes and cosmetics, of bicycles and oil lamps, of intensive cultivation and planned economy.

This is probably the direction in which the destiny of the Micronesians will continue to move. Their tribal customs will continue to fade away, and it is quite open to question whether the race as such will maintain itself in the future, in spite of all positive measures on the part of the administration. In 1910 a German professor suggested declaring the island of Palau a racial natural preserve in order to preserve for posterity primitive tribes with all their forms of life. At the time, no attention was paid this suggestion and, after the present war, there will be even less opportunity for carrying it out than after the Great War. To an increased extent it will be the task of these island chains to help protect the living space of the Japanese nation and the other nations of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. But there will be no room for idyllic conditions. Perhaps we shall be the last generation to have seen this picturesque world with our own eyes. And if in days to come the racial expert, the student of folk lore, and others, wish to become acquainted with the original face of Micronesia, they will turn to the colorful paintings of Paul Jacoulet.